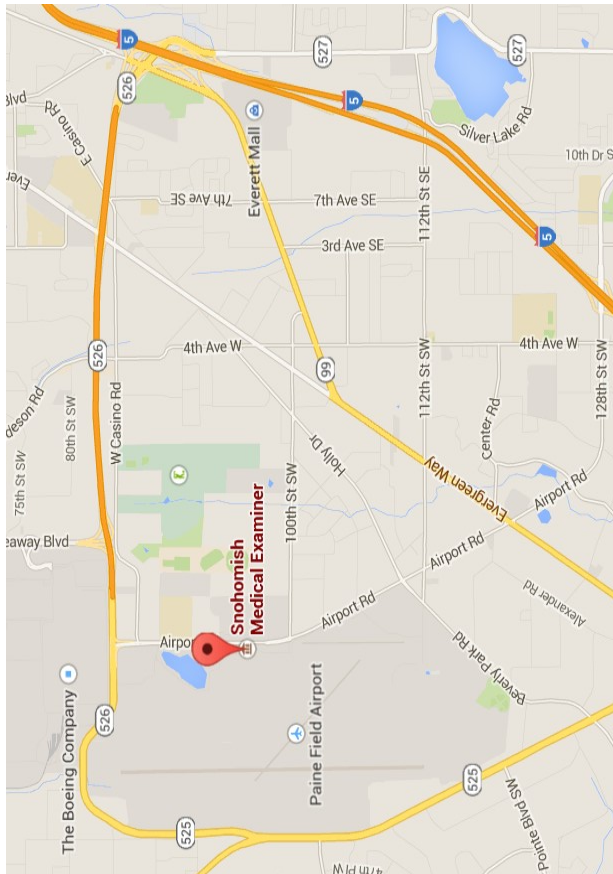


We are located at Paine Field just off  
Airport Road in Everett.



**Snohomish County Medical Examiner**  
9509 29th Avenue West  
Everett, WA 98204

Tel: 425-438-6200  
Fax: 425-438-6222

Please accept our most sincere sympathy. We recognize that the loss of a loved one brings deep sorrow. Please rest assured your loved one will be treated with the upmost respect and dignity.

We sincerely hope the information made available in this pamphlet has been helpful. Please call our office if you have any further questions, or you are welcome to visit our website.

<http://snohomishcountywa.gov/198/Medical-Examiner>

**For additional information, including local funeral homes/crematoriums, records requests, bereavement services, and other resources, please visit the “Information for Families” tab on our main page.**

# Snohomish County

**MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE**  
**Information Guide**

At the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office we believe in providing comprehensive, impartial, and scientific death investigations. We hope to provide closure to the families, instill community trust, and enhance public health and safety.

This pamphlet was designed to help answer some of your questions, explain why we are involved, and what happens next.

**Daniel Selove, MD**  
*Chief Medical Examiner*

**J. Matthew Lacy, MD**  
*Associate Medical Examiner*

***Why is the Medical Examiner's Office here?***

The Medical Examiner's Office investigates all sudden, unexpected/unexplained, traumatic, or suspicious deaths. The job of the Medical Examiner's Office is to perform a comprehensive, impartial, and scientific investigation of the scene.

***What happens now?***

The scene investigator will take photographs, conduct interviews, and gather vital information from the scene. The investigator will transport your loved one to the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office where they will be seen and examined by the Medical Examiner.

***What should I do next?***

1. Take care of yourself and call your family and/or friends for support.
2. The legal next of kin should begin looking for a funeral home or cremation service. The Medical Examiner's Office cannot assist or provide recommendations for a funeral home. If you are having issues or concerns, please call our office.
3. Once arrangements are made, please call us with your funeral home/crematorium selection. We will coordinate with them.

***Who is the legal next of kin?***

The State Law (RCW 68.50.160) defines next of kin in this order: 1) Spouse, 2) adult children, 3) parents, 4) siblings, and 5) court appointed guardian. Washington State does not recognize common law marriage. Please inform us if there are complications with the next of kin's ability to choose a funeral home.

***When does the exam take place?***

Exams are usually done the following business day (M-F). If there is going to be a delay, someone from our office will update you with a more accurate timetable. Your loved one will usually be ready to be released to a funeral home the same day as the exam or the following day.

***How do I find out the cause of death?***

After the exam has been completed, someone from our office will contact you with preliminary findings. Some cases may be listed as "pending" if toxicology or additional tests need to be reviewed. The timetable for toxicology returns are variable. However, please allow at LEAST 3-4 months for the pathologist to receive the results and make a cause of death determination. A "pending" cause of death does not prohibit the release of your loved one from our office or delay the death certificate. If the cause of death is "pending", our office will call the next of kin once the cause of death has been finalized.

***How do I get a copy of the autopsy report?***

The autopsy report outlines the findings of the exam performed. It is different than the death certificate. Please see our website or call our office for instructions to obtain a copy of an autopsy report. A small fee is collected for the report, and we will need a copy of a valid photo ID.

***How do I get a copy of a death certificate?***

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office does not issue death certificates. There are two ways to obtain certified death certificates:

1. From your chosen funeral home / crematory
2. Snohomish County Vital Statistics. The phone number is (425) 339-5290.

***What happens to my loved one's property?***

An investigator will do their best to release all property to the next of kin on scene. If next of kin is not on scene or the property is pertinent to the investigation, we will take it back to our office where it will be inventoried and secured. The property will then go to the funeral home of your choice upon their release. The next of kin also has the option to come to the Medical Examiner's Office to pick up their loved one's property if necessary.

***Can I refuse an autopsy?***

Washington State law does not recognize a right to refuse an autopsy ordered by the Medical Examiner. Autopsies are done to answer medical and legal questions in the public interest, to protect public health or to address a question of law. If the case goes to court, an autopsy might be in your best interest. We recognize that your family or religious beliefs may potentially conflict with performing an autopsy. We are open to discussion to accommodate your wishes, as long as we can fulfill the legal obligation presented by the circumstances of the situation. If there are any concerns or oppositions, please call or notify us immediately.

***Can I do a viewing at the Medical Examiner's Office?***

No. Our office is not equipped to do viewings under any circumstances. Viewings may take place at a funeral home of your choice after the autopsy at the discretion of the funeral home.

***Can I still have a funeral after an autopsy?***

Yes. An autopsy will not interfere with any plans you have for a memorial service.